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Anti-Fascists Are Waging a Cyber War — And They're Winning

Inside the world of antifa researchers as they build an online army to battle far-right extremism



Aaron Gell Sep 9, 2019 · 22 min read ★



Illustration: [crimson_bones_animations](#)



ait, you're AntiFash Gordon?" a novice investigator asked excitedly, as it dawned on him that the mild-mannered instructor at the front of the room

EXA001

was practically famous — the Zorro-like figure behind a notorious Twitter handle.

“Dude, will you autograph my arm after this? Can I buy you a drink?”

It was a punishingly hot Saturday morning in early July, and a dozen young members of a radical Jewish protest group, which I’ve agreed not to name, had convened in an empty sociology classroom at a public university that I’ve also agreed not to name, in a city (or town or hamlet) somewhere in the northeastern United States. They were there for an in-depth workshop in using OSINT, or open-source intelligence, to combat the alarming growth of the white nationalist movement.

“You can buy me a milkshake...” Gordon quipped, referring to a weapon of public humiliation often deployed by anti-fascists.

The mood at the meeting was upbeat but its purpose was grave: mounting an urgent defense against violent right-wing extremism. Skeptical that law enforcement authorities recognize the scope of the problem — or even regard it as a problem at all — Gordon and his anti-fascist comrades have increasingly devoted themselves to doing the job on their own. As he put it, “Antifa is about communities standing up for themselves — autonomous community self-defense.”

He began by noting that there are two distinct but related goals to doxxing: first, to unmask malevolent individuals who believe they are acting anonymously, and second, to expose the genuine hard-line views of those who cloak their extremist ideologies behind mainstream conservative rhetoric, the so-called “alt-light” or “crypto-fash.” In either case, the information is then publicized in hopes that social media sites, financial services companies, and public venues will “deplatform” their targets and that employers, schools, clients, and others will shun them. “The question,” as Gordon put it, “is how do we make their lives worse because of fascism?”

Just about the closest thing Antifa — a congenitally nonhierarchical and publicity-shy movement — has to a celebrity, AntiFash Gordon is a tall caucasian male in his early forties. His face is soft and friendly. He wore black glasses, motorcycle boots, and a western-style shirt over a tank-top. He was joined by two accomplices, Amy and Kevin (who, like many sources in this story, asked to be identified by pseudonyms to protect themselves from harassment).

The workshop was part of a series that also included lessons in street action, first aid, and de-escalation. It was attended by a receptionist, a secretary to a state judge, an engineer, a librarian, a musician, a screenwriter, and several grad students. Millennial

leftist Jews and one Filipina ally representing a variety of political ideologies, they'd mostly come together following the 2016 election, protesting on behalf of migrant rights. They'd turned their attentions to fighting fascism in the wake of the October 2018 Pittsburgh synagogue massacre, in which eleven worshippers were slain by an avowed white nationalist. It wasn't just the "pogrom," as they called it, that had stirred them to action but what they saw as the woefully inadequate response of mainstream Jewish groups — not to mention the FBI and other domestic law enforcement agencies — to the growing menace.

As the meeting began, we sat in a circle. One of the organizers pointed out the refreshments by the window (sliced pineapple, pretzels, trail mix) and urged participants to make use of the yoga mats, blankets, and foam blocks stashed in the corner. "Whatever your body needs," she said.

"Really, feel free to self-regulate," Gordon seconded. "This material is heavy. It can inspire some things."

For all the obvious dangers posed by far-right extremism, the threat has not been a law enforcement priority since the '90s, when the deadly government stand-offs at Ruby Ridge and Waco gave birth to the right-wing militia movement and inspired the Oklahoma City Bombing. Since the attacks of 9/11, which prompted a shift in resources toward radical Islamic terrorism, domestic hate groups have largely been ignored, and sometimes intentionally overlooked. In 2009, after DHS's senior analyst produced an intelligence report warning of the growing threat posed by right-wing violence, a political firestorm prompted the Obama administration to downplay the issue. The Trump administration went even further; shortly after inauguration, it rescinded a grant that had been earmarked for a group dedicated to deradicalizing former white nationalists (reportedly because its founder had criticized the president on Twitter). In 2017, the FBI issued an intelligence report focused on the supposed threat posed by "black-identity extremism" a week before the deadly Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville. Around the same time, DHS appointee Katie Gorka (the wife of a former Trump advisor, Sebastian Gorka, who has been linked to fascist groups), claimed that "the actual threat" of homegrown terror was attributable to anti-fascists, after which DHS quietly disbanded an intelligence unit that had been dedicated to

studying domestic terrorist activity and issuing warnings to police departments around the country.

The failures of the government's inattention have become bitterly apparent. On July 28, a man was shot outside a Miami synagogue in what police called a possible hate crime, mere hours before a teenager armed with an assault rifle and, reportedly inspired by a century-old racist and antisemitic text, went on a killing spree at a food festival in Northern California. Then came the racially motivated August 3 slayings of 22 people at a Wal-Mart in El Paso, and the still unexplained murder of 10 others in Dayton, Ohio, on the same day.

The bloodletting prompted FBI Director Christopher Wray to order a new threat assessment, leading to a flurry of law enforcement activity. Three days later, an Ohio 18-year-old was arrested after the FBI identified him as the source of online posts musing about targeting Planned Parenthood and law enforcement officers (police found 25 guns and 10,000 rounds of ammunition in his home). A few days after that, a man associated with the neo-Nazi National Socialist Movement was arrested with bomb-making materials after allegedly discussing plans to attack a local synagogue and a nightclub he believed catered to an LGBTQ clientele. Weeks later, men independently suspected of planning politically motivated mass shootings were arrested in Connecticut, Florida, Ohio, and New Jersey. In all, more than two dozen people have been arrested after making terroristic threats this month.

Despite this crackdown, anti-fascists — who are acutely mistrusting of government authority — remain determined to protect their communities with or without the help of police. “To me there’s no choice,” said Spencer Sunshine, an expert in militias and other right-wing groups. “Some kind of aggressive countermeasures are absolutely necessary to contain the far right. Otherwise people die.”

The result is that anti-fascist researchers are increasingly adopting investigative techniques typically employed by law enforcement — in some cases, the techniques are deployed against law enforcement — and they are having some success. Recently, in the criminal trial of two men involved in an October 2018 brawl following a New York appearance by Proud Boys founder Gavin McInnes, a detective testified that information collected by Antifa researchers had been used in identifying the accused perpetrators. “After all the videos and photographs... were posted online and social media,” he said, “the doxxing immediately began and there were names then given for the individuals in the videos.”

The detective was likely referring in part to the scoop that put @AntiFashGordon on the map. It began with an October 6 rally in Providence, Rhode Island, which drew a number of alt-right groups. When the event led to a violent altercation, the team scrambled to identify the main perpetrators by examining a collection of livestreams and photos, hunting for likenesses on Facebook. “I got 6 or 7 IDs all at once, just by looking through people who liked the Pennsylvania Proud Boys Facebook page,” one of Gordon’s associates told me. “Occasionally, you just hit a goldmine.”

Shortly thereafter, McInnes posted about his upcoming appearance in New York. The team scoured the event’s RSVP list (which was public) and found several overlaps, including a man named Maxwell Hare, who had been involved in the fights in Providence. They posted his information in a Twitter thread just hours before someone resembling Hare was captured on videotape assaulting anti-fascist protesters on the Upper East Side. Following the melee, a local group, @nycantifa, published a dossier of key players and a taunting video. When police put out a call for information about three unknown persons of interest, @nycantifa promptly obliged.

In another big score, it was recently revealed that the Portland-based Patriot Prayer had been infiltrated by an anti-fascist activist, whose video evidence of the group planning a violent confrontation led to the felony indictment of several group members and may now be used in a civil trial as well. Footage of conservative media personality Andy Ngo chatting with group members also appears to have cost him his job as an editor at Quillette.

“The focus on street action has been sensationalized. There’s so much more to the movement that [people] never see.”

One might think such triumphs — and there are many others, including the enormous trove of leaked extremist chat logs published by the independent media collective Unicorn Riot — would endear Antifa to the public whose safety they’re so keen to protect. Instead, in recent months, anti-fascists have found themselves vilified by mainstream media and political figures. The latest round of scrutiny began with the June 29 Proud Boys rally in Portland, Oregon, during which black clad counter-protesters assaulted Ngo and doused him with milkshakes and Silly String. A few weeks later, 69-year-old protester Willem Van Spronsen was shot by police after apparently trying to set fire to government vehicles at an immigrant detention facility in Tacoma,

Washington. While some on the left were clearly moved by Van Spronsen's impassioned final statement ("I'm a man who loves you all and this spinning ball so much that I'm going to fulfill my childhood promise to myself to be noble..." he wrote), it was one declarative line — "I am antifa" — that seemed to catch the attention of the media. The firestorm led Sens. Bill Cassidy and Ted Cruz to call for anti-fascism to be labeled a terrorist organization, echoing a proposal floated in a petition by Proud Boys chairman Enrique Tarrio. President Trump embraced the idea, calling Antifa "gutless radical left wack jobs."

A spokesperson for the Portland-based Rose City Antifa, who asked to be called David, said the criticism demonstrated that most Americans were still oblivious to the seriousness of the fascist threat. "How many murders have been perpetrated by white supremacists?" he asked rhetorically. "And how many at the hands of leftists? Zero. There it is. Anything else is propaganda, and an attempt to weaponize the government against dissent." That said, while domestic political violence is overwhelmingly a right-wing phenomenon, it's not exclusively so. The man who opened fire at a Congressional baseball game in June of 2017 was a progressive activist who had volunteered for the Bernie Sanders campaign. And the Dayton shooter was a registered Democrat who had expressed support online for Elizabeth Warren, though a political motivation for the attack has not been established.

Nobody in the OSINT workshop seemed eager to "bloc out," i.e., take to the streets in the black hoodies, bandanas, and motorcycle helmets often sported by members of the anarchist "black bloc." But then again, if their intelligence-gathering efforts are effective, they hoped, direct confrontation won't be necessary. "The focus on street action has been sensationalized," Gordon insisted. "There's so much more to the movement that [people] never see."

"Being in the streets directly confronting fascism is an extremely high barrier to entry to people who just want to live in an equitable and free world," S., one of the cofounders of the Jewish group, pointed out, "but there are things you can do other than literally putting your life on the line. And that includes thwarting extremist organizing before it even begins, or exposing and derailing it. These are tactics that the state has used against the left, and they work."

Moreover, independent journalist and anti-fascist researcher Molly Conger noted, they're not especially hard to master. "I like to tell people if you've ever stayed up all

night scouring Instagram for pictures of your ex's wedding, you can do this. It's the same skills."

S.'s group is just one of three that have taken Gordon's training program this summer, and he's mulling over a handful of additional requests. "It's getting so much more mainstream," he said, with the wistfulness of an old-school punk hearing a new Offspring single.

"It used to be just us for a very long time," recalled Daryl Lamont Jenkins, founder of the One Peoples' Project, who began documenting the far right in 1988 and whose work helping to deradicalize white nationalists inspired the new Jamie Bell feature, *Skin*. "Now we have tons of groups doing it, and they're delivering the goods."

Spend enough time burrowing into the rabbit holes of the far right with a sock puppet account, as a false online identity is known, and you're liable to find yourself accepted as a fascist fellow-traveler. That's how an anti-fascist researcher and "recovering musician" going by the alias "Jim Corcoran" found himself in a private Facebook group with Jason Kessler, the organizer of the Unite the Right rally, as he and several other white nationalists planned the August 2018 sequel. The infiltration, detailed here for the first time, would become one of Antifa's most successful intelligence operations.

The first coup came when Kessler asked the group whether anyone could help him edit a propaganda video. Corcoran quickly recommended a friend, who went by the name "Jasper Fletch."

"We thought, *Let's just waste his time and distract him from finding someone who actually knows how to do this*," Corcoran explained. After Kessler sent his new editor 30GB of raw video footage, "Fletch," another anti-fascist, eagerly began poring over the clips for valuable intelligence.

Jim Corcoran had been invited into the planning group by a man using the Facebook name "McKormick H. Foley," a member of Vanguard America whom he'd met in other far-right forums. Foley was helping oversee security for the rally, but it soon became clear that he didn't see eye-to-eye with organizers. At the time, Kessler was defending a lawsuit over his role in the original Charlottesville rally and was desperate to project a

nonviolent image, insisting that they frame the Unite the Right 2 as a harmless “White Civil Rights event.” Foley, on the other hand, seemed to be spoiling for a fight.

“How big and strong do you want guys?” he wondered at one point, going on to brag that he “can bench-press a small car.” Describing the security team he was putting together, he noted, “We are paramilitary + neo nazi,” prompting a rebuke from Kessler. “This is absolutely the wrong kind of thing to be talking about on Facebook,” he said.

“Sometimes I felt almost sympathetic to [Foley],” Corcoran told me. “He just seems like this dumb friendly guy. But then you look at some of his posts and go, ‘Oh, right, he actually does want to kill Jews and is a terrible fucking person.’”

Following a debate about whether Atomwaffen Division, a Nazi terror group linked to five murders, should be invited to provide additional security, Corcoran and a team of anti-fascists began plotting to exploit the tension. The researcher who was posing as Fletch — having delivered an intentionally unusable rough cut of Kessler’s propaganda video — created another sock puppet on the Gab social network. Posting under the moniker “Cat on Steroids” and pretending to be an Atomwaffen associate, he began excoriating Kessler for his timidity, further driving a wedge between the optics-oriented alt-light and more openly violent National Socialist allies.

Then, days before the City of Charlottesville was to hold a hearing on Kessler’s lawsuit demanding a rally permit, Unicorn Riot published the contents of the planning chat, prompting Kessler to drop his suit and sowing further dissention. Shortly thereafter, anti-fascists published doxes of the planning group participants. Before long, Kessler’s former allies were denouncing him as a cuck, an informant, and worse. Whereas an estimated 1,000 extremists attended the first Charlottesville hate rally, the follow-up, held in D.C., drew just twenty. (Kessler did not respond to requests for comment.)

“What I didn’t realize was that if the work was successful they would get desperate, and desperate people are sometimes dangerous.”

But that wasn’t all. Although Jim Corcoran was eventually suspected of being the source of the leaks, the infiltrator behind Cat on Steroids and Jasper Fletch, who provided *GEN* with a collection of screenshots and audio recordings to confirm this narrative, was subsequently able to join several other clandestine groups, including National Socialist

Legion and the Base, ultimately leading to the doxing of numerous members, including Joshua Bates, a former Marine and longtime far-right activist, who has since left the movement. “I underestimated the work they can do,” Bates told me, noting that even his background in military intelligence wasn’t enough to keep him from being exposed. “Just taking on a moniker and getting a VPN is not enough. You always slip up. It’s amazing what they can find.”

AntiFash Gordon’s OSINT workshop began, as it usually does, with a discussion of threat models and the importance of operational security. Even as anti-fascist researchers labor to expose the personal information of their opponents, many are at pains to keep their own identities secret — often “masking up” during public confrontations and employing false personas online. They do so not to avoid public scrutiny the way fascists and online trolls do, they insist, but to defend themselves from the social media mobs, “swatting,” and threats of physical violence typically employed by the far right. The danger is not exaggerated. According to Gwen Snyder, an anti-fascist researcher in Philadelphia, a contingent of Proud Boys recently visited her home late at night. Snyder was out, but a neighbor relayed a message: “You tell that fat bitch she better stop,” one of them reportedly said. While Snyder, who serves on a local Democratic committee, told me she had no regrets about her decision to be public about her identity, she admitted she was concerned for her safety. “I thought the risk would be trolling and harassment,” she said. “What I didn’t realize was that if the work was successful they would get desperate, and desperate people are sometimes dangerous.”

Gordon suggested novice sleuths look at security as a spectrum, in which no amount of precaution is completely foolproof. The more secure you try to be, the less organizing work you can do, he explained, adding that such calculations should be based on a careful threat assessment: a catalog of the risks and the costs of mitigating them. Most anti-fascists view themselves as being in a “three-way fight,” squaring off not only with the far right but with the state as well. Nobody at the workshop planned on doing anything illegal, but as Gordon pointed out, laws can change. “Say Antifa groups get labeled terrorist organizations, we’re all going to have some explaining to do,” he pointed out. “So if you can avoid catching their eye, so much the better.”

“We have no idea how low this can all go,” another Antifa researcher told me, requesting that I delete the tape of our conversation after I’d transcribed it. “If they start rounding us up one day, you may be next, and I don’t want my voiceprint out there.”)

Gordon urged the group to rely on one another for moral support and to avoid sharing their exploits with outsiders. “It does get weird and isolating not to be able to tell your work associates and casual friends how you spend your time,” he said. “There’s some part of you that wants people to know what you do. Please try to resist that. It’s never a good idea.”

Clicking through a slide deck projected on the wall, he tutored the group in the nuances of encrypted text apps like Signal and Wire, burner phones, prepaid debit cards, VPNs, TOR, and other tools of modern tradecraft. He said he generally maintained three mobile phones: one for normal use, a “fash phone,” which he uses to chat with fascists when he’s using a false persona, and an “antifash phone,” for communicating with others in the movement. And he outlined the expenses. “We fight fascism on a budget,” he said. “For our entire crew — and this includes database subscriptions, VPNs, burner phones, and encrypted data storage — it comes to about \$50 a month.”

One key tip for newbies: Friend Gavin McInnes on Facebook. “That man must be lonely as hell,” Gordon said.

One of his comrades, Amy, talked about the difficulty of identifying individuals from sometimes blurry photographs. “If you’re not good at facial recognition, which a lot of us aren’t when looking at seemingly indiscriminate white dudes, look at ears, look at eyebrows,” she suggested. “If pictures are from about the same time, look at hairline.” She noted that the research group has built an entire file identifying white nationalists based on their backpacks, shoes, and other accessories.

“Ear shapes are as unique as fingerprints,” Gordon interjected. “Now I look at people’s ear shapes much more than I used to. ‘Oh, that guy’s got two ridges, that’s kind of weird...’”

Doxxing can cut both ways, and fascists use many of the same techniques. Daryle Lamont Jenkins, who has been outing white nationalists online for nearly 20 years (Gordon called him “everyone’s anti-fascist dad”), actually borrowed the idea from anti-

abortion activists, who in the late 1990s began publishing the home addresses of providers, some of whom were later killed — their names then crossed out in an ominous warning to everyone else.

But anti-fascists are quick to point out a key distinction. “There’s really two kinds of doxing,” Gordon explained. “There’s, ‘Oh, this person is affiliated with a hate group, let’s get together as a community and hold them responsible,’ and then there’s the far-right kind of doxxing, which is, ‘Here’s the home address of a YouTube feminist, go murder her.’ Those are fundamentally different things.”

“I was a pretty easy dox,” allowed Conger, whose personal information has been published. “But the difference is that what we are is not abhorrent.”

As Jenkins put it, “What are they going to do, tell everyone, ‘This person hates Nazis?’”

After a pizza break the lesson continued with a discussion of “socks,” or sock puppets. One key tip for newbies: Friend Gavin McInnes on Facebook. “That man must be lonely as hell,” Gordon said, noting that that the Vice cofounder-turned-alt-right personality never seemed to decline a friend request. And once the connection was made, Facebook would begin sending friend suggestions of other Proud Boys and far right figures, who would generally accept due to McInnes’ tacit endorsement.

“If you think Facebook hasn’t cross-referenced all these people,” Gordon said, “you have no idea what its capabilities are. It would be child’s play to get rid of them, but they don’t.”

Not that it matters much. Many of the most active white nationalists have migrated during the past year to other sites, including Discord, Gab, Telegram, Minds, and VK. “Now they’re trying to make Parler happen,” he said of yet another social network. But while the cat-and-mouse game is ever-evolving, each platform has its vulnerabilities.

For example, Gordon’s crew appears to have identified the accountant for Identity Evropa (now the American Identity Movement) after finding an Amazon account in his name buried in Unicorn Riot’s leaked Discord chats. The man was expecting a baby, and a compatriot had urged fellow members to send him gifts. Antifa published his name,

address, personal photos, and even his CPA license number, but they obscured the faces of his family members. “I’m not doxing a baby,” Gordon said.

Another score, from March of this year, stemmed from a Google review of a Minneapolis tavern, followed by a careful analysis of Instagram pics of a jack-o-lantern and of a cat holding a candy bar. “We’ve doxed people from Pinterest posts, MySpace, Last.FM...” Gordon said.

Next, he moved on to “operationalizing” — what to do with the information when you have it. In the majority of cases, a dox is simply filed away for safekeeping. Via his laptop, Gordon showed the group a vast stockpile of dossiers, organized by affiliation and city, each with a collection of personal photos and screengrabs of incendiary posts. They’d be saved until a given target did something that warranted the publicity.

Many doxes lay out the researchers’ investigative steps in painstaking detail. “The rule is don’t pass information if you can’t confirm it,” said Kevin, Gordon’s other comrade. “Disinformation can spread really easily if we’re not fact-checking our stuff.”

The next step, Gordon continued, was to “find some point of vulnerability: employer, landlord, school, church, anywhere where they would lose some kind of social status or take a hit.” Often, a single phone call alerting an employer to the presence of a white nationalist on the payroll was enough to get someone fired; other times, an online publicity campaign is launched to apply community pressure. “This is not a thing we take joy in — the personal suffering of white supremacists,” David said. “But it is a good thing when a Nazi gets fired, because they have less resources and they’re no longer in a workplace where they could potentially threaten people.”

Many anti-fascist doxes are published as Twitter threads or on specially created blogs. Others are quietly shared with anti-fascist researchers focused on different regions of the country. On occasion, they’re fed to established reporters. At one point, concerned that the local press in Boston seemed naive about the extremist underbelly of a new group calling itself Resist Marxism, Gordon and a few colleagues produced a 35-page white paper, studded with screen grabs and containing 84 footnotes, and credited it to a made up “Study Group.” The efforts led to several national news reports and served as valuable background when the same right-wing organizer announced plans for the August 31 “straight pride march.”

On occasion, the mere threat of being exposed is enough to convince a target to mend their ways. Emily Gorcenski, a transgender woman and data scientist known for her

anti-fascist research and activism, who identified one of the organizers of the Unite the Right rally as a U.S. Marine, admits that having the ability to expose someone with a tweet can be a powerful feeling, “but sometimes you have to have mercy,” she said. “I’ve had people message and say, ‘I am sorry, and I have moved on from that life.’”

Former white nationalist Joshua Bates has been doxed twice. The first time, in 2015, courtesy of the Southern Poverty Law Center, got him fired from his job as a software developer and left him unemployed for four months. Three years later, his personal information was again published, this time by an Antifa group using Cat on Steroids’ leaked chatlogs of The Base, a white nationalist networking platform. Bates, who says he was already “mentally checking out” of the movement before the second dox, recalled the dread he experienced when he realized he’d been outed. “Ever been driving down a two-lane, and a cop turns his blue light on you?” It’s like that, but worse, he said. “It sucked for me. I’m not going to lie. But what the anti-fascists are trying to do is make it hard to be a Nazi. And they do a really good job of that. If the government would stop cutting funding [to deradicalization groups], maybe doxing wouldn’t have to be a thing. But it’s a grassroots reaction by people trying to keep themselves safe.”

Despite the Antifa researchers’ successful track record, everyone I spoke to talked about how emotionally draining the work can be. “At first when you look at one of these chats, you’re like, ‘Oh, more racist internet crap, nothing new,’ David said. “But then you see the seething mass. We often take breaks or switch off, because when you see somebody dreaming about killing you for who you are, for hours on end, it’s unsettling.”

“When the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting happened, the second [the killer’s] name hit the news, I almost threw up,” Molly Conger recalled. “I remember thinking, ‘I’ve read his posts, under his real name, and I just moved on. You can’t tell the difference between shitposting trolls and mass murderers. They all talk the same.’”

Maybe that’s because in a way they’ve all been infected, to varying degrees, by the same disease, one characterized by simmering resentment and fear, and a deep insecurity and yearning for power. Once you start to recognize the symptoms, the vulnerabilities become painfully apparent.

Asked how he managed to penetrate the Base without undergoing even minimal vetting, Cat on Steroids told me, “They asked for my real name, and I just said, ‘Look guys, that’s fed shit. That’s bad opsec.’ If you sound like you know what you’re talking about and basically overwhelm them, you win the argument. This is a world where might makes right. You just have to bluster.”

Emily Gorcenski theorized that white nationalist groups are relatively easy to infiltrate because they never had to develop the defensive protocols leftist groups have. “We’ve been targeted by law enforcement forever, so there’s a security culture,” she said. “Whereas on the right, they’re never in trouble with the cops. It’s like, ‘Sure, why not share a detailed document with your plans for a terror attack?’”

To make matters worse for the far right, Gordon said, “They don’t accept accountability, and they don’t care for each other. If one of us got doxed, we’d offer safe houses and material support. For them, it’s ‘You were weak and stupid.’ And when someone doesn’t get support, they get pissed and come snitching to us.”

“It’s interesting to be their boogeyman. But the truth is I’m basically Ned Flanders. I cook. I have two dogs.”

Meanwhile, right-wing extremists’ bellicose tendencies make them easy to manipulate. “There’s a lot of jealousy and animosity and entitlement,” he continued. “Nobody accepts responsibility, and none of them believe in care and compassion, so they’re fundamentally incapable of reconciling any sort of cleavage in their ranks. You will never hear them say, ‘I fucked up and I hurt you.’ Instead, it’s ‘Fuck that guy, he’s a cuck.’ So any little thing, if you lean on it a little bit, it will blow up into something really big.”

Of course, there have been attempts to infiltrate Antifa, but none have been particularly successful, Gorcenski noted. “They try, but they’re fucking terrible at it because they don’t understand leftist politics. It’s easier to understand the right: They’re bigots and they hate people. All you have to do is sprinkle in a couple slurs, and you’re good.”

As

the meeting broke up, the rookie researchers seemed energized. “They’ll especially hate that there are Jews who want to fuck their shit up,” S. said

when asked why she'd agreed to let a reporter attend the meeting. "Smoke will come out of their ears."

Gordon and several acquaintances made their way to a local vegetarian restaurant. On the way, he was careful not to take credit for the many doxes appearing on the @AntiFashGordon account. "Some cis white dude who creates this hero figure out of himself is exactly what we don't need," he explained. "I have a whole affinity group of people sharing intel with me. And I would be a lonely guy just screaming onto social media without communities to actually mobilize around this stuff."

Still, he seemed to appreciate his growing notoriety. "There are a number of far right organizations that hate me specifically," he said. "It's interesting to be their boogeyman. But the truth is I'm basically Ned Flanders. I cook. I have two dogs."

The work is unpaid, depressing, and seemingly never-ending, he allowed, but it was also rewarding. When I spoke to Daryle Lamont Jenkins, he was getting dressed to attend the New York premiere of *Skin*, in which he's portrayed by the actor Mike Colter, of *Luke Cage* fame. "People complain about Antifa," he said, "but if you're on point, and you rock the boat, they really do appreciate it."

I asked him if he was discouraged that far right extremism seemed to be on the rise, despite all his effort. "You know what? They are the luckiest people on the planet to have Trump in office right now," he replied. "But when their luck runs out, we'll all realize how small they have always been."

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